

DATA SHEET

PH0294851

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED SEP 9 1975

DATE ENTERED

OCT 29 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Cow Camp

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Not applicable

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Joshua Tree National Monument

VICINITY OF Twentynine Palms

Forty-third

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

California

06

San Bernardino

071

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☒ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED☒ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☐ MUSEUM☒ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service - Western Region Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue - Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

STATE

California (94102)

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

San Bernardino County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

172 West Third Street

CITY, TOWN

San Bernardino

STATE

California (92415)

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☒ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Cow Camp lies in a valley amid rocky, boulder-strewn hills in Joshua Tree National Monument. The site became important because of the existence of a natural pond fed by a spring here in an otherwise arid high desert. Historically, there were an undetermined number of small buildings--at least three and probably more--but there remains today the ruins of only one, and of that one there is only a crumbling rubble chimney and the stone outline of a foundation.

Late in its history, William F. Keys erected here a concrete dam, 22 feet high, 800 feet long, and about 18 inches thick, to increase the quantity of water available here for running cattle. The dam, dating probably from the 1920s, is intact, in good condition, and basically unaltered.

The only other remains are those of an old well lined with rock.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1880s-1920s

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James McHaney, William F. Keys

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cow Camp is of local historical significance under the category of agriculture in the specific sense of livestock raising, and to be even more specific, livestock rustling. Cow Camp was developed as the camp of a gang of cattle rustlers who, having stolen cattle belonging to others, used this site to hide them while changing brands with a running iron. Cow Camp was headquarters of a notorious gang of local outlaws.

The above statement of historical significance is based on the following data:

William and James (Jim) McHaney, brothers from Davis County, Missouri, came to this region in southern California during the 1870s. Initially they went into the cattle business with headquarters at Seven Palms in the Coachella Valley. At the age of 20 Bill became the first settler at the Oasis of Mara (Twentynine Palms) in 1879. He befriended and learned much from Indians in the area, and as his brother turned increasingly to illegal activity, Bill went his own way and became part time prospector.

Jim McHaney associated with an ex-convict named Charley Martin who had served 16 years in prison after shooting two men at San Jacinto, the brothers Charley and Willie Button, Ike Chestnut and George Myers. These men constituted the "McHaney Gang", which apparently stole cattle and horses in Arizona to sell in California, and vice versa. Because of its natural pond in an otherwise arid high desert, the gang developed Cow Camp as their hideout, or at least one of their hideouts, and there changed the brands on their stolen stock before attempting to market it. There may have been a couple of cabins at this location before they took it over--it may have been a legitimate camp for cattlemen for a few years before the outlaws came--and the McHaney Gang apparently built more.

Cow Camp was active as an outlaw headquarters during the late 1880s and early 1890s. Three prospectors who camped nearby in 1893 discovered their horses missing one morning, and traced them into the McHaney camp. Confronted there by a bearded rider holding a Colt revolver aimed at them, Frank Diebold asked about the horses and was told by the gunman, "You didn't lose any horses." Diebold started to describe the animals they had lost, and the man with the revolver repeated what he had said in an even more menacing tone. Diebold decided a third warning might be in the form of a bullet so conceded, "No, I guess I didn't".

About the same time the McHaney Gang murdered the discoverer of the rich Desert Queen Mine located nearby, and Jim McHaney took over the mine for awhile before losing it to a bank. In 1894, he apparently sold his cattle interests to George Myers, which may have brought outlaw activity at Cow Camp to a close, turning it to legitimate purposes. During the 1920s, William F. Keys, who had inherited Bill McHaney's ranch holdings and developed other property of his own in the region, took over Cow Camp and used it as a line camp for legitimate stock raising. Keys built the dam to increase the amount of water available at Cow Camp.

Jim McHaney eventually attempted to counterfeit twenty dollar gold coins out of lead plated with gold, was caught by Treasury agents and sent to prison for 17 years. Charlie and Willie Button apparently died in a bar-room brawl. The fate of the other outlaws is unknown.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Fact File, Joshua Tree National Monument Library

Ronald Dean Miller, Mines of the High Desert (Glendale: La Siesta Press, 1968).
Pp. 42-47.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 80

UTM REFERENCES

UTM OK w m
12-6-76

A 11 577200 3766700
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 11 576570 3766150

B 11 577300 3766500
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 11 576470 3766350

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary is a rectangle with the longer axis running in a northeast-southwest direction, the corners of the rectangle indicated by the above UTM references.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gordon Chappell Regional Historian (Revision of 1971 form by F. Ross Holland, Jr.)

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service - Western Region Office

(415) 556-4165

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

450 Golden Gate Avenue - Box 36063

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

San Francisco

California (94102)

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO ☐

NONE ☐

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE SEP 5 1975

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 10/29/75

ATTEST:

DATE 10/21/75

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER